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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: USG TEAM ADVOCATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

¶1. SUMMARY: On October 11, ESTH and ECONOff visited Zarazong villages in Plateau State and discussed with community leaders methods for developing and implementing sustainable income generating micro projects. EMBOffs also facilitated linkage with a local sustainable development network that coordinates among state and federal officials, entrepreneurs, and NGOs as a resource to assist them in implementing their projects. At the grassroots level there is a strong desire for information and assistance to organize communities to support environmentally friendly income generating activities. The Mission will continue partnership efforts to work with communities in Plateau State and other parts of the country.
END SUMMARY

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Zarazong Sustainable Development

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¶2. The Zarazong community is a collection of about seven villages outside of Jos, Plateau State, which survives mainly on subsistence farming. EMBOffs spoke to village leaders about community organizing, resources planning and needs assessment methods for developing and managing effective communal sustainable micro projects. Members of the Mission have been working with the community as volunteers to increase incomes, raise environmental awareness, develop small-scale sustainable community micro projects (piggery, shea nut collection, and beekeeping) and teach effective dialogue skills for resolving communal problems.

¶3. At the meeting, community representatives agreed to form a Zarazong Community Council to oversee the community's micro projects by electing two leaders (with gender balance) from each village. This council is expected to be in place by mid November 2008. In addition to managing the various small-scale community micro-projects, the community council will also address other community-wide needs, such as potable water, transportation, and education for children.

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Jos Sustainable Network

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¶4. EMBOffs also met with members of the Jos Sustainable Network (JSN), a network of local NGO representatives, and discussed how the network can help the Zarazong community build capacity to run environmentally sound sustainable micro projects for income generation. The discussion centered on a pilot shea nut to butter micro project, which may generate income and help battle deforestation and desertification. The JSN promised to work with the Zarazong Community Council once it is formed to develop and implement a sustainable shea butter micro project.

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Comment

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¶5. The Zarazong community efforts are strong examples of grassroots community initiatives and their positive effects on the environment and sustainable development. The Mission will continue outreach efforts to provide information and assistance in Plateau State and other parts of the country.

¶6. This cable has been coordinated with Consulate Lagos.

